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ABSTRACT

This report restates selected Southern Regional Education Board policy recommendations on teacher quality since the early 1980s, outlines key policy areas that need attention, and provides examples of state actions to make needed changes. Regarding teacher preparation, the report discusses university responsibility, partnerships with schools, and accountability and incentives. The report focuses on early recruitment of new teachers, alternative paths to teaching, raising the standards for licensure, and supporting teachers in the early years. In regard to veteran teachers, the report looks at strengthening licensure renewal, providing quality professional development, and ensuring a qualified teacher in every classroom. The report examines salary and compensation to match state goals and incentives and career supports which focus on improving student achievement. Finally, the report discusses coordination of state action and cross-cutting issues (college-school partnerships, data and information systems, and clear communication to the public). (SM)

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SREB

Getting Beyond Talk:

State Leadership Needed to Improve Teacher Quality

December 1999

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EDUCATIONAL BENCHMARKS 2000 SERIES

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Goals for Education: Challenge 2000

BY THE YEAR 2000—

All children will be ready for first grade.

Student achievement for elementary and secondary students will be at national levels or higher.

The school dropout rate will be reduced by one-half.

90 percent of adults will have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Four of every five students entering college will be ready to begin college-level work.

Significant gains will be achieved in the mathematics, sciences and communications competencies of vocational education students.

The percentage of adults who have attended college or earned two-year, four-year and graduate degrees will be at the national averages or higher.

The quality and effectiveness of all colleges and universities will be regularly assessed, with particular emphasis on the performance of undergraduate students.

All institutions that prepare teachers will have effective teacher-education programs that place primary emphasis on the knowledge and performance of graduates.

All states and localities will have schools with improved performance and productivity demonstrated by results.

Salaries for teachers and faculty will be competitive in the marketplace, will reach important benchmarks and will be linked to performance measures and standards.

States will maintain or increase the proportion of state tax dollars for schools and colleges while emphasizing funding aimed at raising quality and productivity.

The SREB Commission for Educational Quality, 1988

TEACHER EDUCATION

BY THE YEAR 2000—

All institutions that prepare teachers will have effective teacher-education programs that place primary emphasis on the knowledge and performance of graduates.

- Better preparation of first-time teachers
- High-quality, continuing professional development for veteran teachers

These are among the biggest challenges for SREB states as they strive to raise student achievement. SREB states have begun many programs to increase the supply of quality teachers. There have been too few efforts to improve the entire system of preparing teachers. As leaders in one state noted, "we have many programs but no system."

Governors and state legislators, frustrated with the lack of change, took several actions in the late 1990s. These efforts to "fix" problems show that more work needs to be done. This report includes quotes from members of a panel at SREB's 1999 Legislative Work Conference; their comments reflect the substance and tone of concerns about teacher preparation.

This report:

- restates selected SREB policy recommendations since the early 1980s;
- outlines key policy areas that need attention (teacher preparation, new teachers, veteran teachers, compensation and career support, and coordination of state actions); and
- provides examples of state actions to make needed changes.

Leadership and renewed attention are needed from governors, legislators, executive officers at higher education agencies, college and university presidents, chief state school officers and local superintendents. Every state needs to take actions to ensure that each child is taught by qualified teachers.

Mark Musick
SREB President

Getting Beyond Talk:
State Leadership Needed to Improve Teacher Quality

Teacher Preparation

College presidents should provide leadership, including the coordination of efforts by faculties in the arts and sciences and education, to improve teacher education programs.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1983

For most institutions significant improvement of teacher education programs will depend on modifying existing four-year programs. More than one model for preparing teachers is needed, with evaluation of the program results.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1985

Most SREB states have strengthened teacher preparation programs within four-year programs, rather than extending programs to five years. They have raised admission standards and called for teachers to have more content knowledge. High school teachers may be required to have a major in the subject area they teach, while teachers in the middle grades may be required to have two minors in content areas. More schools are in partnerships with colleges and universities to prepare teachers, but in most states teacher preparation has not become the responsibility of the entire university. How do we get beyond talk and make progress in raising the priority of teacher preparation?

Responsibility of entire university: Getting beyond talk to action

Several SREB states — including Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Texas — have recent state-level actions that focus on improving teacher preparation. Strategies include partnerships between schools and colleges, P-16 councils (joint efforts to address issues that affect all of education — from prekindergarten through college), and an increased amount of content preparation for future teachers.

This report was prepared by Lynn M. Cornett, SREB senior vice president.

The Georgia Board of Regents made teacher quality a top priority for 1998. The board required two minors for teachers of the middle grades and minors in reading and math for teachers of the elementary grades. It also developed P-16 councils in different regions of the state. University presidents are involved directly in these changes and certify to the chancellor that particular actions have been taken. In fact, the chancellor of the Board of Regents reports that he spends about 40 percent of his time on teacher preparation and school/college issues.

Maryland's secretary of higher education and state superintendent of education have worked together to lead renewal in that state. Their efforts include the formation of P-16 councils. Legislation in 1999 focused on teacher-quality incentives, and the State Board of Education recently announced a set of comprehensive recommendations. The Oklahoma Board of Regents took the lead in the early 1990s with an outside review team that recommended raising standards, focusing on strong programs within colleges of teacher education, and eliminating the colleges' weak programs. Over the years the board has implemented those recommendations. Undergraduate programs that prepare elementary school teachers now include at least 12 hours in each of the core academic subjects. In Tennessee, all future teachers now get degrees in arts and sciences, and Kentucky recently formed a P-16 council.

Partnerships with schools

There is no single issue on which greater coordination between the schools and universities is needed than how to strengthen teacher education programs.

Student teaching is a pivotal aspect of the professional education sequence. Field experiences leading up to student teaching should come early during the education major's program.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1981

"Faculty can't help solve problems in the schools if they aren't out there."

— Robert Tyndall, University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Not enough has happened with partnerships between schools and higher education institutions. For 20 years SREB, other organizations and various task forces have emphasized the need for colleges and universities to have partnerships with schools. The fact is that most partnerships involve limited numbers of schools and limited numbers of college faculty spending time in schools.

Some SREB states are attempting to move in new directions. A prime example is North Carolina, which has begun funding partnerships between colleges and schools. The state outlined its goals, and a national review team

went to the state to look at its proposals. North Carolina makes periodic reports on progress toward the goals. The implementation has been uneven, but some universities, such as the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, have made clear changes in how they work with schools and how teachers are prepared.

Maryland has used professional-development schools (schools designated for field experiences and student teaching) for several years, and about one-third of the graduates are being prepared in these programs. There is a proposal to expand the program with $1.2 million for the 2001 school year. Broad partnerships involving several schools and most teachers and faculty will produce the most widespread results. For colleges and universities to work across distances there need to be models that involve all faculty. Maryland also has developed P-16 councils that form partnerships between schools and colleges and universities. Another effort to encourage college faculty to work with schools is legislation in Arkansas that calls for evaluations of college faculty to include their work with schools.

Schools also can push for partnerships. For instance, any Alabama school that receives state funds for reading initiatives is required to have a partner in higher education. The Alabama Reading Initiative was started with support from business and community partners as well as from schools and universities. The program received $6 million in state funds in 1999.

Accountability and incentives: How do you drive change?

The prevalent reward structure for universities, which tends to neglect performance other than research, inhibits greater involvement in and service to the schools. College campuses should create incentives for closer involvement of faculty in the affairs of the schools.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1983

Colleges of education should receive financial rewards if they make serious curricular and structural changes to improve their programs. Colleges that embark on large-scale, meaningful reforms should be given more assistance than those that only develop one or two new courses. Those that redesign the program should be given more support than those that only superimpose courses on top of the existing program.

States should develop funding for education programs that is related to the quality of the program and its graduates. Adherence to the enrollment-driven formula is no incentive to produce reforms in the colleges of education.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1985

While it is preferable for reforms in higher education to originate within the institutions, inertia and built-in rigidity tend to inhibit reforms. Therefore, state-level leadership is needed. Two of the most serious obstacles to change are enrollment-driven funding and the rewards structures for faculty in arts and sciences and education.

The Texas model is the most promising in terms of holding the entire university accountable for how graduates of teacher preparation programs perform on licensure tests. Texas places the entire university on alert, which could lead to the closing of the teacher preparation program. In this way, not only education faculty but also faculty in arts and sciences and the entire administration of the college or university are responsible. Some states put a college of education on notice or revoke its accreditation.

North Carolina legislation in 1997 called for report cards on each college of education that provide results-oriented indicators, such as employer satisfaction and the percentage of graduates who remain in teaching for four years. Federal reporting on teacher-quality indicators soon will be required of all states. The federal indicators will include measures such as the percentage of graduates who pass licensure tests.

Are there incentives and consequences that involve the entire university? States and colleges and universities continue to struggle with this issue. South Carolina is the only SREB state that has tied funding of colleges and universities to efforts to improve teacher quality. The extent of an institution's efforts indicates whether the entire college or university is focused on improving teacher quality. Colleges and universities that do have institutional focuses on reform will report on pass rates on teacher licensure tests, the percentage of programs accredited, the percentage of graduates teaching in critical shortage areas, the percentage of minority graduates and financial support for research.

New Teachers

Early recruitment

States should develop an array of incentives to attract science and math teachers, including scholarships or loan programs for prospective teachers tied to the teaching of these subjects within the state.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1981

"The South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program has really made a difference — increasing the percentage of new teachers who are minorities from 8 percent to 18 percent."

— Senator Nikki Setzler, South Carolina, 1999

In SREB states and nationwide there are significant gaps between the number of graduates prepared to become teachers and the number who actually become classroom teachers. SREB studies show that about half of a state's teacher education graduates take teaching jobs in that state. Of those who do become teachers, most do so within three years of graduation. After three years, only a small number enter the classroom.

Despite efforts to recruit and retain minority teachers, most SREB states have smaller percentages of minority teachers than they did a decade ago. The overwhelming majority of teacher education graduates are white females.

States use various strategies to get the teachers they need. Efforts include scholarship programs; "grow-your-own" programs to educate paraprofessionals and other nontraditional students (people who have been in the workplace in other jobs but may consider going back to college) to become teachers; and early recruitment programs to reach into high schools or middle schools.

Other SREB states have emulated South Carolina's Teacher Cadet Program, but none has matched its 12-year commitment or demonstrated the same impressive results, particularly in recruiting minority teachers. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows scholarship program, administered by a public/private group, is another successful recruiting tool. The presence of teaching fellows in programs statewide is seen as a very positive sign. Tennessee has an initiative to support minority students in college and to motivate them to become teachers.

Several states have targeted scholarships at specific geographic areas or areas where there is a teacher shortage. Mississippi initially funded 400 such scholarships, and almost twice as many students applied and qualified. Texas and Maryland have new scholarship programs for those who will teach in these critical areas. The Teach for Texas program is aimed at placing teachers in shortage areas; the teachers agree to teach for five years in exchange for the scholarships.

Alternative paths to teaching

States should modify certification requirements to permit graduates in mathematics and science who lack professional education preparation to teach at the secondary level, with safeguards to ensure the quality of instruction.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1981

"Alternative certification holds a real opportunity for our state, because we have large numbers of military retirees with backgrounds in mathematics and science."

— Senator David Karem, Kentucky, 1999

States need to look beyond new college graduates to people who may want to change careers or former teachers who may want to return to the classroom. New pathways are needed to attract and prepare these people to become teachers and earn teaching licenses.

Most SREB states have had alternative-licensure programs for years. Most of these programs focus on subjects in which there are teacher shortages, but some allow alternative paths in all certification areas. While many programs are called alternative programs, they often have requirements very similar to regular certification programs, and they are not different enough to attract large numbers of participants. States such as Maryland and North Carolina are developing new alternative-certification programs. In Delaware, schools and postsecondary institutions join together to provide arts and sciences graduates with mentors, education and on-the-job support to gain certification while they are working as teachers.

Texas has the most successful program in which districts, state agencies and colleges work together to develop an alternative-licensure program. Legislation in 1999 expanded the program, which has had more success in attracting minorities and men to teaching than has the regular process of licensure.

Several states are discussing the use of distance education to deliver programs for teachers. A Kentucky task force is considering expanding its alternative paths to teaching by incorporating distance learning. The *Electronic Campus* of the Southern Regional Education Board, which now has more than 2,000 courses and more than 90 degree programs available from colleges and universities in the region, provides a way for students and teachers to access distance learning to upgrade content knowledge and skills.

Raise standards for licensure

Institute teacher-licensure and program-approval standards based on the knowledge and performance of graduates.

Reduce by one-half the percentage of graduates not meeting initial teacher-licensure standards.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1988

Teacher licensure standards remain low. States should consider raising standards for teachers as part of their effort to raise standards for student achievement.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1998

Since the 1980s SREB states have begun to focus more on prospective teachers' performance and less on the number of courses they have taken. Most states have provisional certification that requires teachers to demonstrate their ability in the first one to three years, usually through written tests and/or job evaluations. States have been streamlining the num-

ber of certification areas and aligning teacher standards with new content standards developed for students.

Several SREB states — including Kentucky, Maryland, South Carolina and Virginia — are raising standards on teacher licensure tests. Oklahoma has a new set of licensure tests based on new state standards. Several states are creating a special certification for the middle grades (grades five through eight, five through nine) instead of lumping those grades into the traditional K-8 certification. Georgia has had generic certification for the middle grades for years and now is moving to subject-specific licenses for the middle grades. Education leaders hope the subject-specific licenses will lead to teachers' being better prepared in the subject matter they teach.

Support teachers in early years

Too little has been done to evaluate the long-term effects of alternative certification; loan scholarship programs; beginning teacher programs; and recruitment efforts, programs and scholarships for minorities.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1990

Teacher turnover in the first few years of teaching is a serious problem in every SREB state. In the early 1990s the SREB compiled data on this topic for several member states. Of a group of beginning teachers, 50 percent remained after five years. After five years, attrition rates tend to decrease and remain about the same until a gradual increase after teachers reach retirement age. Studies show that attrition rates for districts within a state may vary from 2 percent or 3 percent to more than 20 percent; districts need to fully understand their problem before they can propose solutions.

SREB states have had on-the-job evaluation of teachers since the 1980s, but state resources too often have gone only into the evaluation process. More funds are needed to support partnerships with colleges and universities that will provide beginning teachers with the help they need.

Mentor programs are one way to support teachers in the early years. In Mississippi and North Carolina, retired teachers serve as mentors. Maryland's superintendent of education has proposed $16 million in grants to support districts' development or expansion of programs to support new teachers. Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma and South Carolina are improving or expanding their existing programs. Mississippi is using nationally certified teachers in a mentor program, and Delaware and Florida are developing similar programs.

Veteran Teachers

Only a few states have comprehensive plans to link professional development with reforms in schools.

If student achievement is going to improve, teachers need to master new skills and improve their teaching practices. Teachers need to know more about their subject matter, how to link research and practice, and how to use technology effectively.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1996

Strengthen licensure renewal

Licensure renewal is one area that has been a true struggle for SREB states. States are working to (1) align the renewal process with stronger, performance-based standards for initial licensure; and (2) strengthen the content knowledge requirements and the evaluation process for licensure renewal.

Arkansas and Florida require teachers seeking renewed licenses to demonstrate knowledge of subject matter. Elementary teachers in Georgia must demonstrate content knowledge and reading competence to renew their licenses. In Oklahoma, 1999 legislation says that seventh- and eighth-graders will not receive credit for classes taught by teachers without secondary school certification. Delaware has proposed a plan to strengthen licensure renewal and improve teacher evaluation. Virginia has called for licensure renewal to be linked to the recently upgraded Virginia Standards of Learning.

Quality professional development

SREB states spend millions on professional development that has little focus, is not connected with accountability efforts and is not aligned strongly with school-improvement objectives or the content taught in classrooms. Data from a national survey on schools and staffing show that teachers in the SREB states are less likely than their counterparts nationwide to focus on learning content in professional-development programs. States need to ask themselves the following questions: Do you know what professional-development efforts you have? Do you know how much you spend on professional development? Is professional development for teachers at a particular school tied to improving student achievement at that school?

Georgia conducted an extensive study that included an audit of all funds (federal, state and local) spent on professional development and an analysis of "what works." The study found a clear difference between professional development in high-performing schools and that in low-performing schools. In high-per-

forming schools, professional development was planned by the principals and teachers, and it focused on improving student achievement, teaching and learning in those schools. (Other factors, such as time allotted for professional development and topics covered by it, did not differ in high-performing and low-performing schools.)

Florida, Louisiana and North Carolina are developing professional-development academies. Kentucky and Georgia are developing partnerships between schools and colleges and universities; these academic alliances will focus on improving teachers' content knowledge. The partnership effort of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington combines programs for mentor teachers and the interns they supervise. Mentor teachers participating in this program share their knowledge with other teachers in the school and describe the program as exceptional professional development for the entire school. West Virginia is setting professional-development goals and benchmarks for use in evaluating programs. A part of the new plan is the creation of regional councils that will coordinate program delivery.

A qualified teacher in every classroom

Teachers too often are hired based on administrative convenience rather than qualifications. For the most part, there are no real incentives to encourage districts or schools to put a qualified teacher in every classroom, and there are no real penalties for those who fail to do so. (However, there are some incentives and penalties in states that have new accountability systems that focus on improving student achievement at the school level.) According to national surveys on out-of-field teaching, often one-fourth to one-third of teachers don't have majors or minors in the subjects they teach. However, the problem likely is even worse, because state rules often allow teachers to teach two of five classes out of field without classifying the teachers as out of field. Across the region about 35 percent of the middle grades teachers are elementary-certified, meaning that they may have weak content background in areas such as math and science.

SREB actions to put qualified teachers in all classrooms fall into three categories: district incentives; district penalties; and reports to parents. Beginning in 2003, Maryland will reduce grants to districts where provisionally certified teachers account for more than 2 percent of all teachers. In Texas parents are notified within 30 days if their children are being taught by uncertified teachers. By 2006 Arkansas teachers no longer will be assigned to teach subjects for which they aren't licensed. Oklahoma will require intermediate or secondary-level certification for teachers of sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

States and districts may not take the necessary actions to put a qualified teacher in every classroom unless the situation has become a crisis.

Compensation and Career Support

By the year 2000, salaries for teachers and faculty will be competitive in the marketplace, will reach important benchmarks and will be linked to performance measures and standards.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1988

Tying teacher salaries to performance remains an elusive goal. Newer incentive programs emphasize school awards based on student progress.

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1994

Salary/compensation to match state goals

Indicators of progress toward competitive salaries for teachers and faculty include pay plans that reward outstanding performance, expanded responsibilities or expertise in fields with critical shortages. (For example, a certain percentage of salary funds could be set aside for these special incentives.)

Do states' salary structures support goals and match problems? Recent actions in some states focus on specific problems, such as shortage areas (either geographic areas or specific subjects, such as science and math), the need for teachers in low-performing schools, or the high turnover rate for beginning teachers. Maryland, Mississippi and Texas are using targeted funds to address such problems. Texas passed legislation to pay $5,000 per year to master reading teachers in high-need schools.

In Maryland teachers with advanced certification who teach in low-performing schools are eligible for $2,000 annual stipends; college graduates who are in the top 10 percent of their class and remain teachers for three years are eligible for $1,000 bonues. Maryland passed legislation in 1999 to provide incentive funds for teachers who agree to work in low-performing schools, and additional incentives have been proposed for consideration in the 2000 legislative session. Mississippi legislation in 1998 authorized moving expenses and forgivable loans of up to $6,000 for a teacher who buys a home in a district with a teacher shortage and serves that district for three years. In North Carolina and South Carolina, retired teachers now can return to the classroom without risking the loss of their retirement funds.

Incentives and career support

Do the state and district incentives support states' accountability systems, and do they focus on improving student achievement?

SREB states' actions primarily have centered on providing money for those who pursue and earn National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification. Mississippi

and North Carolina are the region's leaders in the number of certified teachers. In fact, while SREB states employ about 38 percent of the nation's teachers, 45 percent of the nation's teachers who are nationally certified are in the SREB region. States need to pay attention to how certification supports goals and improves student achievement.

In several states, schools and teachers are awarded other incentives and funds through statewide accountability programs. North Carolina appropriated more than $140 million in 1999-2000 to reward educators for school-wide improvement in student achievement. Certified personnel receive $1,500 per year for being in an exemplary school as defined by the state's accountability system; teacher assistants receive $500. Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and Texas also provide monetary rewards for teachers based on their schools' performance. In Arkansas, Kentucky and Maryland, schools are rewarded based on performance but teachers cannot receive pay supplements. South Carolina's new accountability program will include rewards for schools.

Coordination of State Actions

SREB states have initiated many programs to increase the supply of quality teachers. But there have been too few efforts to improve the entire system. As leaders in one state noted, "we have many programs but no system."

— Southern Regional Education Board, 1998

Who thinks about teacher quality every day in your state? Coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the numerous recommendations stemming from state actions and reforms is a serious challenge for states. Licensure, professional development and teacher preparation too often become a loosely connected group of programs that are not aligned with one another and send conflicting messages to teachers and principals.

Is there a plan for quality oversight of implementation? Many SREB states have had excellent plans but spotty, uncoordinated implementation with few accurate measures of progress and quality. Different models have emerged. In Georgia, the Board of Regents took the lead in changing requirements for graduates of the teacher preparation programs. Now all agencies, including the Professional Standards Board and the Department of Education, are working to ensure that licensure standards are aligned with the teacher preparation programs. In Kentucky the Task Force on Teacher Quality has been working for about a year. The task force has recommended making one agency responsible for overseeing and coordinating teacher-quality activities in that state. In other states, such as Texas, full-time jobs within state agencies are dedicated to this task. In Louisiana and South Carolina commissions have been appointed to make recommendations about improving teacher quality.

Cross-Cutting Issues

"We need to do a much better job of public relations on teacher-quality issues. Parents, students and the public should understand the message."

— Senator David Karem, Kentucky, 1999

- School/college partnerships
- Data and information system
- Clear communication to public

All issues related to teacher quality need to address several clear themes. The first is that schools and colleges and universities need to work together on these issues.

Second, states need to have a comprehensive system for data collection. They need to use available data from K-12 and higher education to understand the pipeline and to make the needed decisions about issues related to teacher quality. For instance, understanding the supply-and-demand situation in individual districts and classrooms is difficult because information is not available. Oklahoma and Tennessee have extensive systems and analysis to understand the problems and to devise policies to address those problems. SREB studies show that graduates in both states tend to take teaching jobs near the college or university that prepared them — making supply and demand vary greatly within the state. This supply-and-demand pattern, which most likely exists in other states as well, is a problem that states and districts need to solve.

Third, states need to communicate clearly to the public, teachers and principals. They may need to publish different reports, each of which is tailored to a specific audience. A task force in Kentucky has made recommendations about teacher quality; Kentucky Senator David Karem continues to remind the group that clear communication is critical and that, despite past efforts, not enough has been done.